



Cooperatives and Environmental Sustainability: The Case of Migpange Multi-Purpose Cooperative (MIMUCO)

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Abstract

This study examines the role of cooperatives in environmental sustainability. Recent initiatives in natural resource management such as the Fishery Sector Program-Panguil Bay Coastal Resource Management Project (FSP-CRMP), among others, utilize cooperatives as a strategy for sustainable resource management through community participation and introduction of land-based alternative economic activities. Migpange Multi-Purpose Cooperative (MIMUCO) is one of the 24 cooperatives organized through the FSP-CRMP in Misamis Occidental before project phase-out in 1993. Eighteen years after, only 4 of the 24 organizations remain functional; two are on the brink of collapse. MIMUCO is the most stable among the remaining 4. The study is particularly interested in the role of the community organizing process in the organizational sustainability of MIMUCO, the level of ecological awareness of members, as well as their performance in the conservation initiatives introduced by the project until the present. Data were collected through a sample survey incorporating the New Ecological Paradigm Scale (NEP) of Dunlap and Van Liere, key informant interviews, focused group discussion and review of secondary data. Data were analyzed through content analysis and descriptive statistics. Empirical findings suggest that in the context of environmental sustainability, effectiveness of cooperatives is affected by the implementation of the community organizing activities. Similarly, capability building activities do not necessarily result to increased level of ecological awareness seen to be a critical motivation in sustaining pro-environmental behavior such as resource conservation practices. In this particular case, such behavior seems to be inhibited by economic motivations of organization members.